

7 January 1977

COMMENTS ON "B TEAM" RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR CHANGES IN THE PRODUCTION OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

1. In considering the recommendations of the "B" Team on Soviet strategic objectives, it is important to note that the methods for producing national intelligence estimates have evolved over the past 25 years in response to changes in the interests and styles of successive Administrations, the organizational methods of a number of Directors of Central Intelligence, and changes in the international situation. At present, national estimates on Soviet strategic programs and capabilities are produced by a method which centralizes the supervisory responsibility in a national intelligence officer on the DCI's staff but decentralizes the drafting responsibilities to teams of analysts drawn from the various intelligence agencies. This method is designed to insure that significant analysis and judgments from all elements of the intelligence community are reflected at all stages in the process, and that no single staff or agency controls the analysis.

2. The present production method is consistent with certain principles which have guided the preparation of the NIEs throughout their history, regardless of organizational adjustments:

a. A national intelligence estimate is the DCI's responsibility in accordance with his statutory duties. The main text represents his best judgment.

b. A national estimate involves the participation of the agencies of the intelligence community, whose representatives on the National

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Foreign Intelligence Board have the right and duty to introduce into the estimate opinions which diverge from those expressed in the main text.

c. A national estimate is designed to address major topics of concern to US planners and policymakers, and hence its content and its producers cannot be isolated from the process it is designed to support, but at the same time it is not a mechanism for critiquing or recommending policy.

3. The present method of producing drafts is only one of a number of methods which could be employed. Changes should be consistent with the style and needs of the Administration and the DCI, while preserving the principles outlined above.

4. Mirror Imaging. The B Team recommendations call for the intelligence analysts to perceive Soviet objectives in terms of Soviet concepts rather than US concepts. We do not necessarily accept the charge that US intelligence analysts have failed to meet the professional requirement to assess developments in the context of the motivations, objectives and other circumstances applicable to foreign nations and their leadership. In seeking to communicate to US audiences, passages in NIEs have expressed Soviet capabilities and objectives and the US-USSR strategic relationship in terms with which the reader was presumably familiar, e.g., mutual deterrence, damage limiting, assured destruction. Soviet concepts have been reserved for descriptions of Soviet doctrine. An effort has been made to judge Soviet policy on the basis of a large number of factors and influences, of which doctrine is one but not the

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only ingredient. It is true that there has been a tendency on the part of analysts, conveyed in NIEs, to believe there were certain truths about the effects of a large scale nuclear exchange that were accepted by both the US and USSR. Uncertainties and differences on this point, especially for the future, exist in the Intelligence Community and are greater than in previous years. These uncertainties and differences arise from evidence and analysis quite apart from the views of the B Team on Soviet objectives. Nevertheless, in this year's NIE, in response to B Team comments, a special effort has been made to describe Soviet objectives and military doctrine in Soviet terms so as not to leave any impression that the USSR has been judged in US terms. This practice should be continued.

5. Net Assessments. The recommendation that intelligence should not reflect the results of net assessments in NIEs should be accepted with qualifications.

a. The B Team recommendation applies specifically to overall judgments about the future strategic balance as presented in the estimate. In NIE 11-3/8-76 we have largely eliminated this type of judgment, partly because new evidence gives rise to greater uncertainty and partly because the significance of operational factors was well illustrated by the B Team on Soviet air defense. The NIE calls attention to the fact that a full net assessment would be required to take adequate account of such factors, and that the estimate is not such a net assessment.

b. The recommendation that intelligence not conduct net assessments can however, be interpreted much more broadly. Any type of predictive

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analysis or interpretation of the policies and expectations of foreign leaders requires an analytical model which includes US policies and forces among the influences affecting those leaders. Also, even estimates of the technical capabilities of a potential adversary's weapon systems require an "interaction analysis," one part of which is the US force which the foreign system was designed to engage. However, we should accept as a general requirement, that the basis for intelligence estimates of any type--including any net assessments involved--should be made clear to the reader.

c. In previous DCI comments on the issue of net assessments of the strategic balance, it has been acknowledged that presently there is no national level organization responsible for conducting such assessments on a recurring basis. The DCI should therefore encourage officials of the new Administration to identify such an organization--perhaps at the NSC staff level--and pledge the Intelligence Community to cooperate in the function by providing the intelligence data and assistance necessary for its operation. The DCI should object however, to assigning the responsibility for net assessments of the US-USSR strategic balance, or the balance in other types of US and foreign forces to the Intelligence Community. For such a function to be performed by foreign intelligence organizations alone would be an unwarranted intrusion into the national security policymaking process.

6. An Integrated View of Soviet Weapons and Force Developments. Packaging of national intelligence on Soviet military forces into several operational categories resulted initially from the requirements of consumers in the 1960s to organize the presentation of intelligence according to the way the US plans its forces--strategic offensive, strategic defensive and general purpose forces. The pattern of the defense planning process continues to affect this presentation, and properly so.

a. In 1974, the treatment of Soviet offensive and defensive forces for intercontinental conflict were combined with the concurrence of the Secretary of Defense into a single estimate in response to consumer requirements for intelligence on the strategic nuclear balance, that is, the balance as the US measures it.

b. Our present estimative program acknowledges the further requirement, suggested by the B Team among others, for national intelligence on overall Soviet military and foreign policy objectives (as in NIE 11-4) and on overall trends in Soviet military forces and capabilities (as in an inter-agency intelligence memorandum issued in October 1976). While this requirement for integrated assessment appears to reflect the interests of the current Administration, it cannot be accomplished without more detailed assessments of individual aspects of Soviet power and probably need not be done routinely on an annual basis.

7. Policy Pressures and Considerations. The Team B recommends improved methods and procedures for preparation of NIEs which would minimize the

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policy pressure on judgments and prevent abdication by the intelligence apparatus of its responsibility to provide objective answers. Other than taking an indignant and assertive stance, it is difficult effectively to counter such charges.

a. We stress the characteristics of the estimative process as it is carried out by the DCI in accordance with the principles outlined at the beginning of this memorandum. The NFIB participants bring to the estimating process differing experience and professional backgrounds on the basis of which they draw their individual conclusions about specialized military, economic and political developments. If the DCI did not have such a board of specialists and their representatives participating in the national intelligence production process, he would have to invent one to carry out his statutory responsibilities.

b. Within any group of specialists, each one's interpretation of foreign developments is affected by his own experience and responsibilities. Like any group of representatives, they have convictions about US policy that may correspond closely to the advocacy of the bureaucracy which they represent. This characteristic of the national intelligence apparatus presents implicit difficulties in making objective judgments, but the professional integrity of the participants should not lightly be dismissed and the variety of points of view introduces checks and balances into the system.

c. The DCI and the CIA which supports him do not represent any department of government involved in the policymaking process. It

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would be unrealistic to assert that the DCI and the CIA are never influenced by individual policy preferences. It is certain, however, that their independent bureaucratic positions make the DCI and the CIA less susceptible to policy pressures than other participants in the intelligence process and that they serve as an important check on the objectivity of the entire process.

8. Disciplined Presentation of Conclusions. It would be impractical to prescribe a rigorous format for the conclusions and key judgments in NIEs. However, to the extent that the nature of the intelligence available and the needs of the policymakers being supported permit it, we agree that consistency in the presentation of NIE conclusions, key judgments and summaries is desirable. We also agree that it is desirable to accurately convey uncertainty and alternatives in such texts. A 2 to 10 year track record of key judgments of an NIE may have some evaluative utility, but the question of where and how often it is done should be a matter for intelligence managers and consumers to decide on the basis of practical considerations.

9. Procedural Recommendations. The possibility is raised of a chief estimative officer and staff within the Executive Office of the President.

a. If the chief estimative officer were not the DCI, this arrangement would circumvent the statutory responsibilities of the DCI. Such an officer would clearly be in competition with the DCI as the nation's senior substantive intelligence officer. If the officer the B Team has in mind is in fact the DCI, the question of the location of his estimative function and staff would have to be considered as part of the

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broader question of the role of CIA in the community. Our present judgment is that physical and institutional separation of the DCI from his CIA analytical base would emasculate him.

b. As noted above, this recommendation fails to take into account how national intelligence is produced and the checks and balances built into the system. The preparation of the NIE 11-3/8 estimates, for example, involves a program of production by analysts within the military services, CIA and DIA, their various contractors, NFIB Committees, and drafting by analytical teams drawn from the several agencies. The preparation of the large military estimates under the auspices of an officer and staff downtown would not necessarily improve the procedure. At worst, it could reintroduce a monopoly on estimative intelligence which was one of the weaknesses perceived in the former ONE staff system.

c. Location in the Executive Office of the President would not necessarily isolate the estimating process from policy pressures. Operation from such a position might in fact subject that office to additional policy pressures without the checks and balances of the current national intelligence production mechanism.

10. The B Team recommendation concerning the use of a panel of outside specialists to review NIEs has already been approved in principle by the DCI in his plan to establish an Estimates Advisory Panel. Such advisors are envisioned as including a broad range of outside expertise and a variety of viewpoints representing various age groups, political persuasions, and known views about defense and foreign policy. This plan should be implemented as a continuing check on the quality, relevance, objectivity and completeness of national intelligence products.

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11. The recommendation has been made that procedures similar to the PFIAB conceived B Team approach be continued perhaps every other year, to play an adversarial role. Presumably, this would call for assembling a group of specialists known to hold views different from the Intelligence Community.

a. While the evaluation of the PFIAB-DCI experiment has not been completed, at least some policy level consumers and intelligence managers would probably recommend that if the B Team concept were to be used again, a Team C should be added to encompass a group of advocates with less threatening as well as one with more threatening interpretations of an issue than the view held by the Intelligence Community.

b. Individual agencies and NFIB committees should continue the practice of using panels of experts to review important intelligence issues.

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c. The DCI and the NFIB should assume responsibility to convene teams of outside experts whenever appropriate to prepare a competitive analysis on any subject on which there is sufficient uncertainty to make useful an analysis which challenges the estimates of the Intelligence Community.

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